

**CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION
PRODUCTION RESEARCH COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

May 18, 2022

A web/teleconference meeting of the Production Research Committee (PRC) of the California Avocado Commission (CAC) was held on Wednesday May 18, 2022 with the following people participating:

**MEMBERS PARTICIPATING
VIA TELECONFERENCE:**

Bryce Bannatyne
John Burr
Jim Davis
Catherine Keeling
Leo McGuire
Ryan Rochefort

CAC STAFF PARTICIPATING:

April Aymami
Ken Melban (10:30)

OFFICIALLY PARTICIPATING:

Dr. Tim Spann, Spann Ag Research &
Consulting

GUESTS PARTICIPATING:

Doug O'Hara, Somis Pacific
Allisen Carmichael, Somis Pacific
Vicki Carpenter, USDA Agricultural
Marketing Specialist

CALL TO ORDER

Leo McGuire, Production Research Committee (PRC) Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. with a quorum present.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Vicki Carpenter, Agricultural Marketing Specialist with the USDA introduced herself to the Committee.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 8, 2021 PRODUCTION RESEARCH
COMMITTEE MEETING**

MOTION

To approve the minutes of the December 8, 2021 Production Research Committee meeting.

(Burr/Bannatyne) MSC Unanimous

Motion 22-5-18-1

RESEARCH PROGRAM DIRECTORS REPORT

Dr. Spann gave the Committee an update on the progress the Dr. Haizhou Liu has made on the chloride mitigation project that was funded for the 2021-22 fiscal year. He informed the Committee that Dr. Liu is looking for growers who can share recent water analyses for irrigation water from any source from all growing regions to help with their study. Dr. Spann told the Committee he would forward Dr. Liu's request to them if any of them were willing to share their water analyses.

Dr. Spann told the Committee that he and Ken Melban, CAC Vice President Industry Affairs, had a Zoom meeting on May 17 with Tom Bewick and Jessica Shade, National Program Leaders for the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. They discussed NIFA's efforts to better understand the needs of specialty crop producers for research funding through the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) program. Dr. Bewick and Ms. Shade said they are looking for industry stakeholders to serve as relevancy reviewers for SCRI grant proposals to ensure the proposals are aligned with industry needs. Dr. Spann told the Committee he would share NIFA's request with them by email as soon as he received information from NIFA.

Dr. Spann reminded the Committee that cadmium had been a topic of discussion at their December 8, 2021 meeting and that Ken Melban had some new information he wanted to share with the Committee on this topic. Mr. Melban reminded the Committee about California avocado shipments that had been rejected at ports in South East Asia, which was the genesis of the cadmium discussion at their previous meeting. Since the December meeting, the Alliance for Food and Farming had conducted a consumer survey with 1,000 participants and heavy metals contamination was not a concern for U.S. consumers.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Potential continuing funding of avocado rootstock trials

Dr. Spann reminded the Committee that CAC was currently funding a 3-year project to plant a series of commercial-scale trials with five advanced selections from the University of California Riverside (UCR) rootstock breeding program for the purpose of deciding to commercially release these rootstocks or not. That funding expires at the end of the 2021-22 fiscal year and the Committee was asked if there was interest in request a proposal from Dr. Patricia Manosalva to continue to collect data from these trials.

Discussion ensued and there was general agreement that these trials were well designed and were precisely what the industry had been wanting for many years. It was mentioned that regardless of when the University makes their decision to release these rootstocks or not, there is value in continuing to collect data from these trials to share with the industry as growers make decisions about which rootstocks to plant. The

Committee asked how much funding was provided for the initial 3-years of the project and Dr. Spann reminded the Committee that it was \$350,000 plus the cost of the trees. Dr. Spann stated that he believed the ongoing costs to monitor the plantings and collect data should be significantly lower going forward.

The Committee agreed that it would be beneficial to plan to continue to fund the data collection on these trials for at least another 5-6 years so data could be collected from mature trees. However, they directed Dr. Spann to request a proposal from Dr. Manosalva for only an additional 3-years of funding. They asked that the proposal include a timeline for commercial availability.

B. Potential Research Projects for 2022-23

Dr. Spann began the discussion by reminding the Committee of the current funding obligations for ongoing projects in the 2022-23 fiscal year. These include \$76,074 for an avocado lace bug project with Dr. Mark Hoddle and \$24,866 for the chloride mitigation study with Dr. Haizhou Liu. Dr. Spann also stated that given the leadership transition taking place at CAC no target 2022-23 budget for production research had been set at this time.

A robust discussion ensued. The first topic that was raised was avocado crop coefficient for irrigation and whether the project currently being done by Dr. Ali Montazar was sufficiently funded. Dr. Spann stated that Dr. Montazar currently has USDA funding that is fully supporting his work at present; however, his trial sites are limited to the southern growing region. There was general agreement that it would be worthwhile to inquire whether additional funding for some northern trial locations would be beneficial to Dr. Montazar's project.

The issue of avocado branch canker (ABC) was discussed next and the Committee discussed that we now have a good understanding of what organisms cause ABC and some preliminary data about effective fungicides but there are still no fungicides registered for use against ABC. There was agreement that ABC is enough of an issue that it would be beneficial to investigate registering a fungicide(s) for its treatment. Discussion ensued about the issues surrounding product registrations and potential costs. Dr. Spann said he would discuss the issue with Dr. Themis Michailides who recently completed a CAC funded study on ABC as well as look into what fungicides are registered for use on avocados on Florida which would then only require a California registration.

The topic of weed control and the status of the registration for glufosinate. Dr. Spann informed the Committee that the glufosinate registration is in process and is working its way through the Department of Pesticide Regulation, but that it is a slow process. The Committee asked if they could receive an update at their next meeting on the currently funded herbicide work that is being conducted by Dr. Peggy Mauk. Dr. Spann agreed he would coordinate that for the Committee's next meeting. There was no consensus on the need to fund additional herbicide work currently.

The next topic that came up for discussion was the carbon footprint of avocado production. Dr. Spann informed the Committee that this was a timely topic as there is a group that recently submitted a multi-million-dollar proposal for federal funding to look into the carbon footprint of tree crops, including avocados, in California. Dr. Spann told the Committee that Drs. Lou Santiago and Darrel Jenerette, Department of Botany and Plant Sciences at UCR, would be leading the work on avocados if the proposal is funded. Dr. Spann also informed that Committee that although the purpose of the proposal is not to conduct a full-scale life cycle analysis for avocados many of the pieces of information needed to do so would be gathered. Thus, if this proposal is funded, a life-cycle analysis could be completed with some additional support from CAC. The Committee agreed this would be a worthwhile investment and would revisit this topic at a later meeting when the funding status of the proposal is known.

The final topic discussed was the avocado lace bug (ALB). Dr. Spann informed the Committee that a pest control advisor (PCA) had recently identified ALB in a grove in Carpinteria, which is a significant jump from its know range in San Diego, Riverside and Orange Counties. Following some discussion, the Committee agreed it would be good to receive an update at their next meeting from Dr. Mark Hoddle about his ALB work and discuss further at that time if there are any holes that could be filled with additional funding.

C. Lease Renewal of Pine Tree Ranch

Dr. Spann had provided the Committee with a written summary of the history of Pine Tree Ranch and the projects that have taken place there since CAC began leasing the site from the Cal Poly Pomona Foundation for use as a demonstration grove in 2013. Dr. Spann informed the Committee that CAC was entering its final year of the initial 10-year lease on the property and it would be beneficial for the Committee to discuss the merits of the site and whether a lease renewal would be worthwhile.

Discussion ensued and the Committee asked what the annual cost of the lease was. April Aymami, CAC Industry Affairs Director explained that the lease rate changed over the course of the 10-years and in the final year it would be about \$24,000. She also explained that original lease agreement includes a renewal option for two 5-year terms.

Although it is understood that Pine Tree Ranch was never intended to be a profitable commercial grove, the Committee asked about the financials of the Ranch. April Aymami informed the Committee that for the 2021-22 fiscal year the Ranch is projected to make a net profit of about \$97,000; however, for the 10-year period of the lease it is estimated that the Ranch will show a loss of about \$300,000. Dr. Spann reminded the Committee that some projects conducted at Pine Tree Ranch saved CAC from having to spend funds elsewhere. As an example, he reminded the Committee that CAC used trees at Pine Tree Ranch for pesticide studies during the polyphagous shot hole borer threat, which required crop destruct and significantly debilitated the trees. Without Pine Tree Ranch, CAC would have needed to find a grower cooperater and pay for the cost of the crop and likely trees lost in that study.

The Committee agreed that overall, Pine Tree Ranch has been worthwhile and brought a lot of value to CAC and the industry. The Committee asked Doug O'Hara, current grove manager, if there were any concerns or major capital improvements that would be needed if CAC renewed its lease. Doug stated that the well is the greatest limiting factor and working out an agreement to install a variable frequency drive (VFD) to allow for more flexibility in irrigating independent of Cal Poly's portion of the ranch. The Committee asked what that would cost and Doug responded that he believed it would be about \$20,000 but could go much higher if any addition repairs are needed to the well.

The Committee agreed that it would be in CAC's interest to pursue a lease renewal and to even consider expanding the number of acres leased to be able to have more and larger projects at the Ranch. The only concerns raised were the limited ability of the growers in the south to access the Ranch and not having full control over the property that ownership would provide.

ADJOURN MEETING

Leo McGuire, Production Research Committee (PRC) Chairman, adjourned the meeting at 11:18 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy Spann

EXHIBITS ATTACHED TO THE PERMANENT COPY OF THESE MINUTES

EXHIBIT A May 18, 2022 Production Research Committee AB 2720 Roll Call Vote Tally Summary



CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION
Production Research Committee
AB 2720 Roll Call Vote Tally Summary

To be attached to the Meeting Minutes

Meeting Name: <i>California Avocado Commission Production Research Committee Meeting</i>	Meeting Location: <i>Teleconference</i>	Meeting Date: <i>May 18, 2022</i>
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Attendees Who Voted	<u>MOTION</u> <u>22-5-18-1</u>
Leo McGuire, Chair	Yea
Bryce Bannatyne	Yea
John Burr	Yea
Jim Davis	Yea
Catherine Keeling	Yea
Ryan Rochefort	Yea
<i>Outcome</i>	Unanimous